

Communication Matters

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Barriers To Treatment and Recovery For Individuals who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The following article was written by the Minnesota Chemical Dependency Treatment Program staff and is used with permission. See www.mncddeaf.org for related articles.

Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing face a number of barriers when seeking help and support for a substance abuse problem. A number of factors, some of which are listed below, can make it difficult for a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to access treatment services and to maintain a sober lifestyle upon completion of treatment.

Recognition of a problem

Within the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, there is a lack of awareness about the problem of substance abuse. Many individuals in these communities have not had access to the recent widespread efforts to educate people about the dangers of drug use and abuse. Public service announcements on TV have often not been captioned. Education/prevention curricula in the schools has not accommodated the communication skills of deaf or hard of hearing children and have often been insensitive to their culture. Because of the awareness lag, alcohol continues to maintain a protected status as compared to other drugs and the abuse of chemicals continues to carry a stigma which discourages individuals from admitting a problem. Naturally, as with any other minority community, these communities work to present a positive image and, in so doing, may be reluctant to admit to problems.

Confidentiality

For many years, a grapevine-like system of communication has kept deaf people informed of community news across the country. Frequently, deaf individuals who live in one area of the country socialize and communicate

often with deaf individuals in other areas. Individuals from the Deaf Community often express concern that sharing information in treatment will mean putting one's life story into that grapevine. Resultant loss of respect and status in the Community is feared by many people who struggle with their chemical use. The confidentiality which is such an integral part of treatment is in conflict with the grapevine part of the culture.

Lack of Resources

Deaf and hard of hearing individuals have few resources for help with alcohol and other drug problems. Few treatment programs exist which offer deaf and hard of hearing people the kinds of services necessary for them to access and benefit fully from the program. Services such as counselors fluent in American Sign Language, assistive listening devices, TV decoders and TTY's are not commonly found in available programs. After treatment the picture remains bleak in many areas of the country where interpreted Twelve Step meetings are rare if they exist at all; where interpreters are difficult to find or pay for; where the recovery person must resort to writing notes back and forth to communicate with his/her sponsor; and where few recovering community members are available to serve as role models and guides on the path to recovery.

Enabling

Often concerned people around the deaf or hard of hearing individual don't recognize the signs and symptoms of a chemical use problem or fail to confront the individual on his/her behavior. Behaviors related to the person's use sometimes end up being attributed to the hearing loss. Family and friends, in a sincere but misdirected effort to help, rescue these individuals from the consequences of their behavior, robbing them of the op-

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Past issues of Communication Matters are posted on the **E-Learn Deaf & Hard of Hearing Resource Center**. Information or news related to Deaf or Hard of Hearing services may be forwarded to Julie Eckhardt at jewel@chartermi.net. Views expressed in this bulletin are not necessarily the views of Michigan Department of Labor & Economic Growth-Rehabilitation Services.

Communication Matters is available on the web at: www.michigan.gov/mrs.

Barriers to Treatment

portunity to see how their alcohol or other drug use negatively impacts their lives. Failing to hold an individual accountable only serves to prolong his/her willingness to seek help.

Funding Concerns

Programs that meet the communication and cultural needs of deaf and hard of hearing individuals and which supply the missing educational pieces related to substance abuse are expensive. They require specially trained staff that are difficult to find. Because of the low incidence nature of this group, local treatment is often not cost effective and often individuals must travel long distances to access appropriate treatment services, adding to the cost of the treatment. The funding issue is further complicated by a lack of understanding and the special needs on the part of funding sources, whether these are public or private funds. Frequently, the process for accessing funds presents another barrier by its complicated nature and the need for an interpreter.

Lack of Support in Recovery

Generally, pursuing a lifestyle free from mood altering substances means leaving old friends. Often, few deaf or hard of hearing people reside in the same geographical location, and at the present time, the numbers of deaf or hard of hearing people in recovery are also small. Even after completion of a treatment program, many people need and benefit from ongoing education and support from counseling, therapy and support groups. Finding this kind of service that is accessible to a deaf or hard of hearing individual presents an additional obstacle.

Minnesota's Model Treatment Program

The Minnesota Chemical Dependency Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals (MCDPDHHI) is a viable option for Michigan residents needing treatment. Funding sources are available, including Medicaid. To refer an individual for treatment, contact the program directly to discuss options.



According to MCDPDHHI, this program is open to people who are hard of hearing, but is primarily designed to meet the needs of deaf people who use ASL and other visual communication systems. Treatment is provided for alcohol and other drug problems, with people 16 years and older. Staff members are trained in deafness and substance abuse. They are respectful of the deaf culture, communication and diversity.

To contact MCDPDHHI:
800-282-3323 Voice and TTY
deafhoh1@fairview.org
www.mncddeaf.org

More Deaf/HH Recovery Resources on Page 3

Michigan's Salvation Army Harbor Light

The Salvation Army Harbor Light Adult Intensive Outpatient Program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Individuals located in Monroe, Michigan. Although considered an outpatient program, a domiciliary option is available for clients who require housing while in the program. Salvation Army Harbor Light accepts deaf or hard of hearing clients who are at least 17 years of age.

Program services include detoxification, family treatment, intensive outpatient program, transportation, referral and follow-up care. The brochure states that all staff are instructed in American Sign Language. The program is licensed by the Michigan Department of Public Health and is also accredited. Medicaid and other insurances are accepted.

For more information or to make a referral contact:

Salvation Army Harbor Light
Voice: (734) 457-4340
TTY: (734) 457-0661

D/HH Recovery Assistance

Deaf/HH Aware Treatment

Marika Blumerick CAC1

Serving Oakland, and Macomb Counties and providing substance abuse assessment and counseling, including Methadone counseling. Marika is Deaf and fluent in ASL

Millennium Treatment Services

1400 East 12 Mile Road
Madison Heights, MI 48071
Voice: (248) 547-2223
TTY: (248) 547-2250
mvorosma@bignet.net

Communication Access Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (CAC)

Individual therapy, psychological evaluations, substance abuse counseling and more. Staff fluent in ASL

1631 Miller road
Flint, MI 48603-4720
(810)239-3112
Fax: (810) 239-1606
www.cacdhh.org/

National Deaf Academy

Residential program located in Florida. Psychiatric, sexual trauma and abuse, and substance abuse treatment.

19650 U.S. Highway 441
Mount Dora, FLA 32757
Voice & TTY: (800) 752-7345
www.nationaldeafacademy.com/

12-Step Meetings with Interpreters

For additional information contact your local area AA office and ask for the Special Needs Committee Representative or contact:

Helen Faith Jones
734-457-0661 (TTY)
734-457-4340 (V)

Helen_Jones@usc.salvationarmy.org

Detroit

Thursday 3:00 PM
AA
Deaf Hearing & Sign Language Center
19185 Wyoming
Detroit, MI

Holly

Monday 7:30 PM
AA
Holly Presbyterian Church
207 East Maple
Holly, Michigan

Lansing

Friday 8:00 P.M.
Alano East Club
220 S. Howard Street
Lansing, MI 48912
517/482-8957

Monroe

Sunday 9:30 AM
AA (New Beginnings)
Salvation Army Harbor Light
3580 S. Custer Rd.
Monroe, MI

Monroe

Monday 8:00 PM
NA
Church of the Nazarene
3401 S. Custer Rd.
Monroe, MI

Wednesday 6:30 PM
AA

Church of the Nazarene
3401 S. Custer Rd.
Monroe, MI

Friday 1:30 PM
The Salvation Army Harbor Light
3580 S. Custer Rd.
Monroe, MI

Temperance

Wednesday, 8:00 PM
AA
Carr Community Center
9240 Lewis Ave.
Temperance, MI

On the Web... Hearing Not Required

Sounds of Sobriety (SOS): www.geocities.com/soundsofsobriety/

AA Live Chat: www.aalivechat.com/

AA Online: www.aonline.net/

Deaf and Hard of Hearing AA Resources: www.dhh12s.com/

Sober24: www.sober24.com/

